

Testimony of Michael Capozza
In regards to
H.B. No. 5037- AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30,
2023.

Appropriations Subcommittee on Elementary and Secondary Education
Public Hearing - February 17, 2022

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and respected members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Michael Capozza and I am a school counselor at Norwich Technical High School. Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony regarding HB5037- An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023.

Specifically, I am here today to testify about the importance of school counselors and the need to fund additional school counselors so that every student has access to a school counselor.

Before the pandemic our country was dealing with a mental health crisis, and now it has been infinitely exacerbated since the beginning of the pandemic. Since starting my practicum and internship last year, I have seen more students and teachers in crisis then ever before. As the pandemic has dragged on the demand for mental health support has exponentially grown. Because of the pandemic mental health services across the state have been strained. Seeing a counselor outside of school now has reached 6 month long waiting lists. For some students, school is the only resource available for mental health assistance. This leads to the conclusion that more counselors are needed to address these challenging times now and in the future.

School counselors do not solely provide mental health services. Our jobs also include teaching students study techniques, choosing classes, running lessons in the classroom, and helping students apply for college among many other tasks. Thus, students rely on us for a myriad of reasons. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) recommends a school counselor to student ration of 1:250. Connecticut currently stands at 1:457. Proper services cannot be rendered at this level. Many students might be missing out on crucial mental and academic support they are entitled to because of this. Also, as a male we are severely underrepresented in this field. This has a negative effect on male students because many have expressed that they do not feel as comfortable opening up to a female counselor. If children have the option to choose between a female or male doctor, then why is this not the case for school counselors?

School counseling and helping others succeed is a passion of mine. However, without the proper resources, we cannot be expected to reach and help every student who needs assistance. Our field is increasingly given more tasks, yet the support is not keeping pace. Counselors are getting burnt out and this is severely impacted the quality of the work we can provide. I hope that you will keep this in mind while you are deliberating on this bill. This is an investment our students and by extension our future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Michael Capozza